

# **INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE FY04 EQIP RANKING CRITERIA PUGET SOUND LOCAL WORK GROUP**

## **LOCAL WORK GROUP (LWG) – PRIORITY SETTING**

The Puget Sound Local Work Group has taken the following actions:

- 1) A maximum point value has been assigned for each “Resource” and “Additional” Consideration. The weight of each category was based on the priorities determined through the locally led process.
- 2) Local modifiers were established for each consideration. This allowed the LWG to localize the ranking criteria by including modifiers that were not addressed in the state template.
- 3) Points were assigned for each modifier.

## **Ranking the applicants – Using the Worksheet**

**Important – Before granting points to an applicant for any item:**

- 1) **The modifier must apply to the area to be treated under the application.**
- 2) **The application must contain a conservation practice eligible for EQIP cost share or incentive payment that will address each modifier for which points are being awarded.**

## **SOIL RESOURCE CONSIDERATION (Maximum: 50 Points)**

### **“There is a soil condition concern” (10 Points)**

This modifier addresses soil tilth, crusting, water infiltration, organic matter, compaction, and soil contaminants. Points are granted if there is sufficient indication that FOTG Quality Criteria is not met on the land included in the application. This may be based on case file information and applicant interview.

### **“Streambank stabilization” (10 Points)**

Grant points if there are streambank areas within pasture or cropland that need to be stabilized to halt excessive bank erosion and sediment loading are being treated by installation of practice 580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection. Also allow points for practices (treatment) that facilitate the regulation/exclusion of domestic livestock from streambank areas that are actively eroding.

### **“Groundcover type” (0 to 40 Points)**

Points are assigned according to the groundcover type.

Cropland w/o cover crop	0 pts
Cropland with cover crop	10 pts
Pasture	20 pts
Forest	40 pts

## **WATER RESOURCE CONSIDERATION (Maximum: 325 Points)**

### **“A buffer practice will be installed” (45 Points)**

Grant points if the application includes a buffer practice that will provide a water quality benefit. Filter strips, field borders, grassed waterways, hedgerow plantings, field windbreaks, shelterbelts, contour grass strips, grass buffer strips, and riparian forest buffers are all examples of conservation buffers. Evaluation may be based on aerial photos, topographic maps, and applicant interview

### **“Nutrient Management will be included (non-livestock operations)” (35 Points)**

Grant points if the application is a non-livestock operation with lands where plant nutrients and soil amendments are applied, and will include the development and implementation of the Nutrient Management practice to minimize agricultural non-point source pollution of surface and ground water resources. Evaluation may be based on case file information and applicant interview

**“A CNMP will be included (livestock operations)” (45 Points)**

Grant points if the application is a livestock operation with lands where animal manure is applied, and will include the development and implementation of a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan that meets NRCS criteria. Evaluation may be based on case file information and applicant interview.

**“Pest Management will be included for crop or pasture” (10 Points)**

Grant points if the application includes crop or pasture where pest control is needed to reduce adverse effects on ground and/or surface water by including the development and implementation of the Pest Management practice. Evaluation may be based on soil interpretations, case file information related to pesticide risk analysis, and applicant interview.

**“Storage is needed for animal manure” (45 Points)** Grant points if a waste storage facility is needed and included in the application. Evaluation may be based on applicant interview, livestock numbers, and current storage capability.

**“Heavy use areas need stabilization” (25 Points)**

Grant points if there is a need to stabilize small areas of short-term livestock containment to improve water quality and/or quantity. Evaluation may be based on soil interpretations, case file information, and applicant interview. The conservation practice “Heavy Use Area Protection” will be included in the application.

**Points)**

**“Forest access roads deliver sediment to salmonid-bearing streams” (35 Points)**

Grant points if there is sufficient indication that forest (private, non-industrial) access roads are delivering sediment directly or indirectly to salmonid-bearing streams. Evaluation may be based on the applicant’s Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan, aerial photography, topographic maps, and applicant interview. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) definition for stream Types 1, 2, or 3 shall be the basis for determining if the stream is salmonid bearing. Use either DNR Typing Maps or fish presence maps developed locally through the Limiting Factors Analysis. LWG has assigned points based on proximity.

Road adjacent to or crossing stream	35 pts
Road within 1/8 mile of stream	25 pts
Road within ¼ mile of stream	15 pts
Road within ½ mile of stream	5 pts
Road more than ½ mile of stream	0 pts

**“Proposed contract area is within a groundwater sensitive area” (35 Points)**

Grant points if the application is within an area that has been determined by the LWG to be a sensitive groundwater area. Examples include groundwater recharge areas, wellhead protection areas, groundwater management areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, and sole source aquifers.

Name or location of sensitive area #1	King Co. Mapping Resources	35 pts
Name or location of sensitive area #2	Pierce Co. Mapping Resources	35 pts
Name or location of sensitive area #3	Thurston Co. Mapping Resources	35 pts

**“Proposed contract area is adjacent to a 303(d) listed stream or drains into it via a defined tributary” (25 Points)**

Grant points if the application has a 303(d) listed stream running through it, or is adjacent to such a stream, and the proposed treatment will address one or more identified water quality concerns of that listed stream. The 1998 list of 303(d) streams can be found at the following website:

[http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/1998/wrias/1998\\_water\\_segs.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/1998/wrias/1998_water_segs.pdf)

If the application area is not adjacent to a listed stream, grant points if it is upstream and adjacent to a tributary (perennial or intermittent) of that stream as identified on a USGS quadrangle map, and the proposed treatment will address one or more identified water quality concerns of the listed stream. In these instances, the LWG may assign different points based on proximity to the listed stream.

Adjacent to stream segment	25 pts
Upstream distance < ¼ mile	20 pts
Upstream distance ¼ to ½ mile	15 pts
Upstream distance ½ to ¾ mile	10 pts
Upstream distance ¾ to 1 mile	5 pts
Upstream distance > 1 mile	0 pts

**"Irrigation System will be improved & or IWM will be applied" (10 Points)**

Points will be awarded if the current irrigation system will be improved and irrigation water management will be applied; or if irrigation water management will be applied. This includes replacing an open delivery system with pipeline, replacing a leaky delivery pipeline, converting from wheel lines to a center pivot system, & converting from overhead sprinklers to a micro system.

Irrigation Water Management is defined as the process of determining and controlling the volume, frequency, and application rate of irrigation in a planned, efficient manner. The purposes of IWM include managing soil moisture to promote desired crop response; optimizing use of available water supplies; decreasing non-point source pollution of surface and groundwater resources; and to minimize irrigation induced soil erosion. It includes the use of devices such as tensiometers, watermarks, or neutron probes to determine moisture levels in the soil.

**"Distance to surface water" (0 to 45 Points)**

Grant points according to the up stream distance to surface water, defined as a solid or dashed blue line on USGS quadrangle map.

Greater than 300 feet	0 pts
101 to 301 feet	15 pts
10 to 100 feet	30 pts
Less than 10 feet	45 pts

**"Proposed contract is located in a watershed area downgraded by the Washington State Department of Health" (45 Points)**

Grant points if proposed contract is within a watershed impacting a shellfish area downgraded by the Washington State Department of Health and listed in the Commercial Shellfish Growing Area Map as "Prohibited", "Restricted", or "Conditional" categories. The maps may be found at the following website: <http://ww4.doh.wa.gov/gis/growingareas.htm>

**AIR RESOURCE CONSIDERATION (Maximum: 50 Points)**

**"Odors from animal waste will be treated" (30 Points)**

Grant points for treatment and/or application of animal waste that reduces odors in the farm vicinity. Evaluation may be based on case file information or applicant interview. Treatment of the problem will include the development and implementation of a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan that meets NRCS criteria.

**"Distance to occupied structure" (0 to 25 Points)**

Grant points according to the distance of the nearest occupied building not under the applicant's control to land that is part of the application. Scale distance from currently available aerial photographs.

Greater than 500 feet	0 pts
101 to 500 feet	10 pts
Less than 100 feet	25 pts

**PLANT RESOURCE CONSIDERATION (Maximum: 185 Points)**

**"There is an excessive invasion of weeds or woody vegetation" (40 Points)**

Grant points if there is sufficient indication that there are adverse impacts to plant production, condition, and quality goals as a result of invasive weeds or woody vegetation. Evaluation may be based on aerial photography and applicant interview.

**"Livestock have uncontrolled access to riparian areas" (60 Points)**

Grant points if there are riparian areas that are not fenced and there is sufficient indication that grazing of domestic animals occur within these areas. Evaluation may be based on aerial photos, case file information, and applicant interview.

**“Prescribed grazing will be applied” (15 Points)**

Points will be awarded if the applicant agrees to apply prescribed grazing on the proposed contract acres. The definition of prescribed grazing is the controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing animals managed with the intent to achieve a specified objective. The purposes are: to improve or maintain the health & vigor of the desired plant community; maintain or improve water quality and quantity, reduce soil erosion and maintain or improve soil condition; and improve or maintain animal health and productivity. It includes developing a grazing schedule for the operating unit to document expected quantity and quality of forage for each pasture; number of livestock by kinds and class, and periods of grazing, resting and other treatment for each management unit.

**“Vegetative cover will be improved to solve resource problems” (25 Points)**

Grant points if improving existing vegetative cover will help solve another resource problem related to soil, water, air, or animals or help to comply with laws/regulations. Improving vegetative cover does not include the reseeded of hay fields as a normal part of a crop rotation.

**“Riparian Buffer area benefited” (0 to 60 Points)**

Assign points by entering the length and acreage of the buffer. This will assign 5 points for every 100 feet of length and 2 points for every tenth of an acre with a maximum of 60 points.

**“Practice significantly benefits native species – Yes or No” (25 or 0 Points)**

Many of our rangeland habitat sites for one reason or another do not have a source or native seed plants in existence that could serve to improve plant community condition even with total non-use. Some of these areas had been converted to cropland and then abandoned, others may have been subject to repetitive wildfire, etc. These sites often need Range Management, have impaired Wildlife Habitat values, have impaired Water Quality, etc. In order to reintroduce native plant materials onto the site it will be necessary to complete practices which include Fencing, Range Seeding, Critical Area Treatment, Prescribed Grazing, Livestock Watering Facility, Heavy Use Area Treatment, etc.

Assign 25 points if significant native plants are established or if planned practices will significantly improve native plants. Otherwise assign 0 points.

**“Forest stand improvement will be applied” (20 Points)**

Points will be awarded if the applicant agrees to apply forest stand improvement on the proposed contract acres. The definition of forest stand improvement is to manipulate species composition and stocking by cutting or killing selected trees and understory vegetation. The purposes are: to improve understory forage production, aesthetics, wildlife & fish habitat, recreation, hydrologic conditions; to improve or sustain timber production; to initiate forest stand regeneration; or a combination of purposes. Documentation for this practice includes: the extent and size of the treatment area; spacing, density and numbers of preferred species and understory species; stocking rates in terms of basal area, spacing or trees per acre by species and size class distribution; and the method, felling direction and timing of tree cutting.

**ANIMAL RESOURCE CONSIDERATION (Maximum: 240 Points)**

**“Proposed contract area is adjacent to a stream which supports listed salmonid.” (60 Points)**

Grant points if the application has a stream which supports listed salmonids running through it, or is adjacent to such a stream as identified on the map (*Distribution of Federally-Listed Salmon, Trout, and Char on Private and Tribal Lands* dated September 2002). Exception – Do **not** grant points for Bull Trout in the Colville Watershed.

**“A practice will be implemented to benefit terrestrial species occupying the proposed contract area” (35 Points)**

Grant points if the application includes one of the following conservation practices and provides direct wildlife benefit for terrestrial species that occupy the proposed contract area. The LWG may assign different points for this modifier based on the proposed practices to be implemented.

Riparian Forest Buffer	10	pts
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	5	pts
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	10	pts
Restoration & Mgmt. of Rare and Declining Habitats	10	pts

**“There are in stream structures known to be barriers to passage of salmonid fish on eligible lands” (100 Points)**

Award points if there is sufficient indication that in-stream structures; including road culverts, on forestland (private, non-industrial), agricultural and range lands; are impairing upstream passage of salmonid fish. Evaluation may be based on the applicant’s Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan, aerial photography, topographic maps, and applicant interview. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) definition for stream Types 1, 2, or 3 shall be the basis for determining if the stream is salmonid bearing. Use either DNR Typing Maps or fish presence maps developed locally through the Limiting Factors Analysis .

**“Priority wildlife impact” (0 to 40 Points)**

Assign points if terrestrial species are within 1 mile or priority aquatic species are within 1 mile up stream of the proposed contract area. Scale using according to WDFW Habitat and Species Map.

No listed species	0 pts
Terrestrial species only	10 pts
Resident fish presence only	10 pts
Anadromous fish presence only	20 pts
Terrestrial & resident fish presence	15 pts
Terrestrial & anadromous fish presence	30 pts
Resident & anadromous fish presence	35 pts
Terrestrial, resident & anadromous presence	40 pts

**“Fenced buffer for livestock exclusion from stream” (40 Points)**

Grant points if project includes a fenced buffer for livestock exclusion from stream

**“Increased fish access” (0 to 40 Points)**

Assign points if fish access is expected to increase as a result of the contract.

No increased fish access	0 pts
Fish access increased to less than ¼ mile of stream	15 pts
Fish access increased ¼ to ½ mile of stream	30 pts
Fish access increased to greater than 1 mile of stream	40 pts

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS (Maximum: 150 Points)**

**“Planned practices will assist the producer in complying with laws/regulations” (70 Points)**

Grant points if the application includes practices that will assist the person in complying with the Dairy Waste Law, AFO/CAFO regulations, or the Forest Practices Act. In order to qualify for points, compliance must be enforceable by an agency with the ability to impose fines or sanctions for violation. Points may not be granted if the applicant is under a court order to carry out a plan. Nor can EQIP be used to assist applicant come into compliance in sodbusting or swampbusting situations. Evaluation may be based on case file information and applicant interview.

**“Additional financial and/or technical assistance will be utilized” (50 Points)**

Grant points if the treatment area is receiving assistance from a cost share program, located in a district priority area, or the additional financial assistance is being received from another non-federal entity.

**“Human consideration (perfection points)” (15 Points)**

Grant points if the applicant has completed two or more conservation practices within the previous 5 years with the assistance of NRCS, CD’s or cooperating agencies that meet NRCS FOTG Standards and Specifications. Evaluations of this modifier may be based on case file documentation or applicant interview.

**“Area zoned long term Ag/forestry” (15 Points)**

Grant points if the area has been zoned long-term ag/forestry by county zoning ordinances. Tools used will be King, Pierce and Thurston County zoning maps.